



Ethiopia’s Third Class Citizens

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Abstract

Ethiopia is a country that is shaped by societal and cultural norms which perpetuate the subordination of Ethiopian women as a way of life. Present issues that continue to plague Ethiopian women include Female Genital Mutilation, Early Marriage, Lack of Adequate Maternal Healthcare, Gender Violence, Lack of Access to Education, Economic and Land Ownership Issues and Lack of Political Participation of Women in the Ethiopian Government. All of these women’s rights issues are both irreprehensible human rights violations and a threat to human security. While most of these practices are against the law, many continue to benefit from these cultural practices, therefore the law is not enforced.



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Key Questions

The research conducted aims to examine the effects that Ethiopia’s cultural and societal norms has on the continued subservience of women as a gross human rights violation as well as the negligence of communities and the government to fully address these human rights violations. The continued threat against women in Ethiopia is a continued threat to their human security.

Main Arguments

- Ethiopia allows for the continued oppression of women by continuing to allow cultural practices that define a woman’s role in a household structure to be secondary to men which in turn, guarantees that they will never be able to rise above the expectation of having a secondary role to men for fear of rejection and retribution by society.
- Between 2000-2012, approximately 74% of Ethiopian women had undergone FGM better known as female genital mutilation (UNICEF 2013), a practice that includes literally cutting off a girls clitoris, labia majora, and labia manora. The purpose of FGM is to keep girls from engaging in pre-marital sexual activity to preserve her virginity for her husband
- 41% of girls report being married before the age of 18 in Ethiopia (UNICEF 2013) the purpose of child marriage in Ethiopia is for “improving status of girls; family, strengthening family ties, ensure that girls’ virginity is maintained and preventing the possibility of the girl not getting married when she is older.”(U.S. State Department 2011.) Most girls who became child brides were married before the age of 15. The younger a girl is at the age of marriage, the less likely she is to be educated and therefore challenge the unjust role that has been set by her husband and society.
- 68% of women in Ethiopia believe that their husbands have the right to beat them. This statistic alone suggests that society aims to put women in a position of subservience which, in turn, suggests that the purpose of women’s existence is to bear children and bear children and those two things cannot be fulfilled then even they themselves believe that they should be punished. 59% of women report having experienced sexual violence from a partner as well.

Conclusion

According to statistics, there are high percentages of Ethiopian women who experience some sort of violence promoted by cultural traditions. The negligence on the part of the Ethiopian governments to address these issues is to promote the subordination of women. The government has laws in place forbidding female genital mutilation, child marriage, and domestic violence but because culturally women are considered to be secondary to men, these laws are virtually ineffective and do not reach women in rural areas. As a continued threat to human security, the primitive cultural practices that most Ethiopians adhere to should be addressed by the international community and seen as a dire human rights violations. Therefore, the most substantial way to end these gross human rights violations would be to empower women through the work of NGO’s as well as increase awareness of the rights of women with both men and women alike. Furthermore, the Ethiopian government should further enforce national laws against gender-based violence in rural communities in order to break rigid gender roles..



Retrieved from: girlsnotbrides.org

References

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- Ethiopia Health and Demographic Survey 2011, United States Agency for International Development. Retrievedfrom <http://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR255/FR255.pdf>

Table 4
Marital norms and attitudes towards intimate partner violence among currently married women by residency and education in Butajira, Ethiopia (n = 1,994)

Attitudes and norms	Urban (n=254)		Rural (n=1,740)		Literate (n=295)		Illiterate (n=1,699)	
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	%	95% CI
Women's opinion of saying no to sex								
Not accepting	40	34–46	31	29–33	39	33–45	31	29–33
Partially accepting	47	41–53	48	46–50	48	42–54	48	46–50
Highly accepting	13	8.9–17	21	19–23	14	10–18	21	19–23
Women's opinions on justifications for being hit								
Not accepting	29	23–35	14	12–16	23	18–28	14	12–16
Accepting	49	43–55	49	47–51	50	44–56	49	47–51

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